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Wotan



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Wotan, or **Woden**, is an ancient human deity adopted by the Nazairi Highlanders who is sometimes regarded as the male counterpart to [Freya](#). Known primarily by the Highlanders as the King of Beastmen, Wotan is said to lead the Wild Hunt (**Wotan's Hunt** by the [Nazairi](#)) across the night sky with his procession of champions, collecting fallen warriors to return with him to his great hall. There the fallen will eat and feast and drink until Ragh Nar Roog.

The appearance of Wotan's Hunt is considered an ill-omen by Skelligans and Nordlings alike, but to the Nazairi Highlanders, it is considered a blessing and a sign of the coming winter.

Wotan



Epiphets	Lord of the Hunt, King of Beastmen, The All-Father
Patron for	War, Winter, Hunting, and Death
Worshipped by	Skelligans (Formerly), Nazairi Highlanders, Werewolves
Symbol(s)	Triple Horns, Wolves, Ravens
Religion Center	Assengrad, Nazair (Formerly)

Contents

[hide]

- History

- 1.1. Earliest Mentions
- 1.2. Relocation to Nazair
- 1.3. Unification
- 2. Cult
- 3. Associated Legends
 - 3.1. Wotan's Gift
 - 3.2. Wotan's Hunt
 - 3.3. Ragh Nar Roog
 - 3.4. Saovbliedd
- 4. Trivia

History

Earliest Mentions

Records from the time are few and far between, but contemporary scholar **Damyn Black** gleaned from his intensive research into the etymological origins of certain human words, that when humans first arrived, their settlements were established on islands and along the coasts of the Continent. Those that settled in the Skelligan Archipelago would go on to establish the **Cult of Freyja** and alongside it the Cult of Wotan. Sources on the relationship between the cults and their patron deities conflict, with some claiming Wotan to have been **Freyja's** primary consort and even godly husband, while others claim the deities were unaffiliated, and others still claiming open hostility between them. Whatever the case may have been, a schism occurred within Skellige in much a similar manner as the schism which would later result in the banning of the worship of **Svalblod**.

Relocation to Nazair

Wotan's name was stricken from the collective Skelligan consciousness, alongside any positive associations to his legends and stories. Worshippers of Wotan were cast into exile, and so they took their ships and headed across the Great Sea to the mainland where they made landfall in what would become **Nazair**. There they split off into separate clans, headed by patriarchs called lairds, and established territories along the coast and further inland along the Yelena river. Some others still, chose to venture into the mountainous highlands, which eventually became their namesake. The worship of Wotan thusly continued amid the clans unfettered, but as they adapted so too did their beliefs. Records of this time were lost with the sacking of **Assengard**, but it is believed that the clans that settled along the coasts and Yelena River propagated trade with their neighboring nations which eventually lead to their advancing wealth, while those clans that remained in the interior maintained their old traditions. Those of the wealthier clans traded their titles as lairds for those of lords and began to form alliances with other noble families and even those of foreign lands. Meanwhile those further inland remained set in their ways, determined to keep to themselves and preserve their beliefs and way of life. Thus, the split between the Highlander clans and the Nazairian nobility was born.

Unification

Though some Nazairi nobles retained their beliefs in the old gods and continued to uphold ritual sacrifice in the name of Wotan, the Highlanders considered themselves the "true sons of Wotan" and would often initiate bloody conquest against the nobles. Villages outside the protection of their noble lords often adopted the highlander traditions as a means to remain unmolested, while others were themselves a combination of highlander and noble serfs. In this way, the worship of Wotan continued to unify the nation's human population.

In the year 903 a prominent noble house established itself in what would become **Assengard**, later the capital of **Nazair**. This house sought to unify the nobles and highlander clans under a single banner, proclaiming themselves bearers of Wotan's Gift, which they vowed to share with the rest of the clans. They did this by marrying themselves to prominent lairds in the highlander clans, promoting the unification of noble and highlander blood, and eventually succeeded in bringing all of the noble houses and clans to heel through marriage alliances, trade, and treaty. They also firmly established the worship of

Wotan and even codified certain practices into law. Though conflicts would continue for the next three hundred years, **Nazair's** people would remain firmly united in their worship of the King of the Hunt.

Cult

The Cult of Wotan is currently extant but far more diminished than ever before, with the only surviving practitioners being Nazairi Highlander clans and some folk practices still being carried out by citizens of smaller, more secluded villages on the fringes of the province. **Assengard** once served as the cult's center of worship, but since its sacking by the Redanians, and then the subsequent Nilfgaardian occupation, many among Nazair's noble population have fallen in line with the teachings of the **Cult of the Great Sun**.

Records exist of certain cult practices that may have been responsible for its initial banning from Skellige, among them the ritual cannibalism and sacrifice of their enemies. After the fashion of the **Vildkaarls** of **Svalblod**, it is said that certain elite warriors among the Nazairi Highlanders could take on the form of beasts, namely those of **monstrous wolves** by wearing the skin of a wolf they'd ritually sacrificed to Wotan. It was believed that the spirit of the slain wolf would be summoned from Wotan's hall and enter the body of the warrior, granting him the ferocity, speed, and cunning the beast possessed in life. Once attained, it was believed that this power could then be transferred from parent to child through blood and ritual.

Associated Legends

The legends surrounding Wotan have a history of oral tradition, passed down from person to person through warrior poets called skalds. These skalds would recount tales of great battles of old as well as spread news from clan to clan. Skalds did write their works down in the decades leading up to **Assengard's** sacking. However, most of the manuscripts were destroyed alongside the castle. What remains are only a few of the most commonly agreed upon variants of Wotan's prominent myths.

Wotan's Gift

It is said that before his exile from the land of the old gods, Wotan would often wander the mortal realm in various forms. His favorites were that of a conspiracy of ravens and a large wolf. Once, while traveling as a wolf he was ensnared in a trap set by one of his godly enemies, where he remained for seven days and seven nights. It was on the eve of the eighth night that he was discovered by a young woman, who took pity on the trapped wolf and freed him. Wotan was too weak to return to his godly form and so the maiden cared for him for another seven days and seven nights. On the eve of the eighth night Wotan felt his strength restored and he returned to his godly form, to the shock and awe of the maiden. In thanks of her selflessness, Wotan laid with the maiden for yet another seven days and seven nights. On the eve of the eighth night the maiden fell pregnant, and Wotan proclaimed his gift bestowed.

It was said that the maiden birthed a pair of a wolf pups, one male and one female, who went on to spread their father's gift throughout the land.

Wotan's Hunt

Older stories indicate that Wotan hailed from the land of **Mörhogg**, where he and his army of champions feasted and sang as they awaited Ragh Nar Roog. In the days preceding or just following a large conflict in the mortal realm Wotan and his riders would fly across the night sky in search of worthy warriors to add to their ranks. Wotan's Hunt was usually comprised of his most skilled champions and their hounds whose howls would fill the skies and herald the Hunt's passing. It is said to look upon the riders is perilous as the riders are the souls of the dead themselves and should one be unworthy or unwilling to join their ranks it is best to be out of the way when the Wild Hunt rides.

Traditionally, a warrior must have died in battle to be considered worthy of joining Wotan's riders, but if a warrior was worthy enough in life, he or she may even be bid to join his hunt early. To deny such an offer was considered a great insult, but tales have survived which

indicate that some brave warriors had managed to refuse Wotan himself and live, either through tests of cunning, strength, or skill. Wotan was said to greatly respect those who could best him or his champions in these tests, thereby earning the victorious warrior a place among Wotan's elite riders when their time came. Those that challenged him and failed would face his wolves, who would tear their bodies apart and his ravens would eat their eyes. These souls would then wander the mortal realm forever, blind and plagued by undeath, never knowing peace.

Ragh Nar Roog

Tales of Wotan's involvement in **Ragh Nar Roog** are conflicting. Some coincide with the commonly accepted Skelligan iteration, where he and his riders, known by the Skelligans only as the **Wraiths of Mörhogg** sail the demonic vessel the **Naglfar** to unleash an army of demons in the final battle between the forces of Chaos and Order. During this great battle, the golden rooster **Kambi** will awaken the mythical hero, **Hemdall** to answer the call of battle. **Hemdall**, according to some sources is one of Wotan's greatest foes, the two having developed an intense rivalry before Wotan's exile from the land of the old gods.

The Nazairians believed that as the chosen people of Wotan, they would be called upon during **Ragh Nar Roog** to aid the Lord of the Hunt in defeating his old enemies. In their success they will initiate **Tedd Deireádh**, and from it a new world will be reborn, where Wotan would rise as its new sun and his champions would inherit the new world.

Saovbliedd

The tales of Saovbliedd, also known as the Ghost of the Amell, are considered very recent additions to the mythos surrounding Wotan, and because of this there is almost an overabundance of primary sources, many of which contradict. In the mid-late 13th Century stories began to circulate of a monstrous she-wolf who stalked the **Amell Mountains** and would occasionally venture south into the villages within the foothills. Though the origins and descriptions of the entity differ, it was almost universally agreed upon that it was some sort of spirit.

In some places the spirit was that of a fair maid, a wild-haired daughter of Wotan who would appear before a worthy hunter and endow him with her father's many blessings. It was said that for a day and a night she would lay with any hunter—or hunters—and when they would rise, they would never again miss their mark. In others the spirit was nothing more than a manifestation of the land itself, a specter that embodied the ever-changing nature of the taiga. Its presence signaled the beginning and end of winter, no more unnatural than the wind or the stones, or even the shifting phases of the moon. In yet others, among the great tribes that still inhabited the mountains, the spirit was given the name Saovbliedd, the Ghost Wolf. Thought to be the herald of Wotan's Hunt, or even a cursed fallen of his ghoulish procession, it took the form of a wolf or of a young woman, both formidable. They claimed it was a specter that haunted the forests of the valley, seeking a worthy opponent to finally lay its spirit to rest or to reclaim its place among his champions. It would howl whenever the Wild Hunt would ride across the sky, in a baneful effort to call back to its companions of old.

Many claimed that the creature did not in fact exist at all but was merely the scapegoat for the many unexplained disappearances which had occurred across all of Nazair since before their ancestors had landed on the coast from the Great Sea. However, there is surviving documentation in the form of a bounty, issued in 1226 by the King of Assengard which calls for warriors of the land to venture into the Sudoth Valley and investigate a rising number of disappearances and brutal maimings, offering 500 ducats to any man who brought before the king an unnatural beast who might be responsible. What's most curious is the almost apathetic nature of the call to arms, especially when one considers the storied history of King of Assengard and the mysterious disappearances of his wife and eldest daughter. This then gives credence to the notion that the Saovbliedd was in fact a living creature, or creatures, that for more than a decade was carelessly permitted to feast on the undesirables of the kingdom and whose elusive nature inspired local legend.

Trivia

- Wotan is based partly on Odin, but the two figures are actually separate deities in the real world.
- It is also meant to be heavily implied that Wotan is not actually a god but is in fact a deified folk version of the Nordling's King of the Wild Hunt.

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